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PSYCHOLOGY & SILENCE

by
STANISLAW
ZIELINSKI

Edited by DANIEL BASSUK
+ Pendle Hill Pamphlet 201

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STANISLAW ZIELINSKI

1909-1974

THE TWO ESSAYS in this pamphlet were written by Stan Zielinski while a student at Pendle Hill in the 1950's. Later, in 1962, he joined the teaching staff as crafts instructor, and held this post until his death on April 22, 1974. During those twelve years Stan was a teacher, confidant, and friend to numerous students and staff members at Pendle Hill. But each spring he would return to his farm in Fulford, Quebec, where he and his wife, Miwa, conducted summer crafts courses.

At Pendle Hill this quiet man was best known as a master weaver and top-notch instructor of weaving. And although he held a master's degree in physics and electronics from Warsaw and Paris Universities, his real reputation among his friends was as a mechanic: if something could be made with hands and manual tools, Stan could make it!

Yet the major part of his life was devoted to writing. As a twelve year old boy he wrote a science fiction novel, which was published a few years later, and while still a student in Warsaw University he produced an *Encyclopedia of Radio* (1928), along with several hundred articles on popular science. After World War II, while living on his Canadian farm, he wrote his *Encyclopedia of Handweaving*, and in 1951 he began a bi-monthly magazine, *Master Weaver*. Its 23 years of publication ended only with Stan's death, and it had subscribers in such far

was a dangerous pastime; many of Stan's climbing companions stayed in the mountains forever. But in spite of their danger the lure of their heights held him. For the longest and most enduring of Stan's loves was for nature, for wilderness, for a free life away from so-called civilization. Europe seemed to him already very crowded, especially his beloved Tatra mountains. Besides, it was nearly impossible, without being rich, to acquire a piece of land in Poland where one could live and be self-supporting. Both Stan's and Miwa's parents and grandparents belonged to the already impoverished class of the landowners. "After their property had been sold," says Miwa, "we became the 'lack-lands,' as were so many young people of our generation."

But there was plenty of land practically free in Canada—or so they thought. Without thinking twice they decided to go there. It wasn't difficult for Miwa to obtain a position in the Polish General Consulate (later in the Legation at Ottawa), and Stan got a contract for writing a book about Canada. By the end of 1937 they found themselves in Montreal.

World War II interfered with their cherished dream to settle in some far away wilderness on the Eastern slopes of the Rockies. As second best they chose a small farm in Fulford, a still undeveloped, hilly corner of Quebec near the Vermont border. Here the skiing opportunities were very good—indeed, Stan skied in the Quebec hills until the last decade of his life. But the farming opportunities turned out to be very poor. After an amusing (in retrospect), but rather disastrous and short-lived attempt at mixed farming, Stan abandoned his original project and started a weaving school, which later included pottery and other crafts. He had learned weaving during the war, but the school did not begin until 1948, after the district got electric current and the telephone. Until then the Zielinskis had to walk two miles to make a phone call, and used coal oil lamps for light.

They were searching for a religion without cumber, and in

the course of the search they were directed to Montreal Monthly Meeting, whose clerk at that time was Lloyd Williams. They had known Lloyd during the war years through their mutual work for refugees, but had never heard a word from him about Quakerism—a typical instance of hiding one's light under a bushel. It came through, nevertheless, and the Zielinskis were soon convinced that the Society of Friends was the religious group they should join.

For the remainder of his life weaving and pottery supplied Stan with a modest livelihood. Unlike Thoreau, he never left his Walden to go back to the city where he could, no doubt, have secured a well paying job and a higher standard of living. But Stan's ultimate choice was a simple life, unencumbered by tax returns. His personal belongings, collected after his death, did not fill two medium sized suitcases.

Stan's last great love was Pendle Hill. It was a love at first sight. Since his first term as a student in the winter of 1951-52 he never missed a year without a longer or shorter stay in the place that became his spiritual home: studying, reading, repairing the old meeting benches, making new tables, and teaching . . . teaching . . . teaching.

THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM

THE WAY IN WHICH RELIGION is discussed by most psychologists is paradoxical. They assume that religion does not correspond to any objective reality, and from there proceed to analyze religious experience as an emotional disturbance, thus arriving at a conclusion potentially inherent in their postulates. There are good and valid reasons for this misunderstanding, and the peculiar attitude of St. Paul towards sex is not the least of them, being indirectly responsible for the compensating position of Freud and his followers.

But to anyone who has experienced or hopes to experience the reality of the spiritual life, such condemnation must seem preposterous. If there is such a thing as the life of the spirit then psychology has no right to pass judgment upon it, just as physiology cannot pass judgment upon the writings of Freud even though they were produced by the muscular action of his fingers holding the pen. Psychology, like any other science, is only a tool, perhaps a very powerful and even a dangerous tool, but nothing more. There is no doubt, however, that psychology can be useful in the search for ultimate reality, since both Oriental and Christian mysticism applied psychology to religious discipline. Mystical symbolism and the repetition of sacred formulas are but two examples. And there is no reason why we should not take advantage of the more efficient methods of modern

psychology if they can help us. The only aspect of psychology of interest to us, then, is the extent to which it can serve the process of spiritual growth.

The best way to decide how to use a tool is to learn about its possibilities and its limitations. Here the question arises as to how to select the best one. First, the task of choosing one from among the many schools of psychology seems to be hopeless. Only an expert could find his way through the maze of contradictory statements, expressed in an ever changing vocabulary based on different and mostly arbitrary assumptions, and leading to apparently unrelated analytical methods. What astonishes an unbiased observer is the fact that all these schools have about the same fairly good therapeutical results, and consequently none of them can be completely wrong, although probably none is entirely correct. It would all be less puzzling if leading psychologists would consent to use more uniform terminology, instead of inventing a brand new vocabulary for every new therapy. When translated into plain language the different theories become much more similar, and their practical equivalents still more so. The main points of disagreement are the basic postulates: Adler's drive to power, Freud's libido, Rank's birth trauma, and Horney's basic anxiety. There must be some truth in all of them.

The outstanding value of psychological technique is that it can show the patient an objective picture of a large part of his psyche, as opposed to the subjective ideas that he may hold about himself. We have then at our disposal a method of learning as much about ourselves as possible or as may be necessary, and the more we know about at least the upper layers of our unconscious, the easier it will be to remove the psychological obstacles in our way. Psychoanalytical methods may not be very effective when dealing with neuroses, because these disturbances are usually accompanied by an unwillingness to see one's own real troubles, but they should be quite successful in

the case of healthy individuals. The limitation of psychoanalysis is due to the fact that the analysis does not penetrate very deeply. As a consequence the role of analysis is limited to the very early stages of religious development. Fortunately these are precisely the stages when one needs the most help.

Now let us follow a hypothetical case of spiritual growth with all its many obstacles, and see which of them can be removed with the help of psychology. Suppose that we have a person who does not know, or does not wish to recognize, the existence of such a thing as religion. He calls it superstition, relegates it to a lower mentality, and is very proud of his superiority. On a higher level he tries to keep an open mind, which is usually empty from being always kept open. But here a need for religion, which he will call looking for knowledge or truth, may find a roundabout way to penetrate his defenses. His rationality may shudder at such words as 'God' or 'Spirit,' but he will not deny that there must be some ultimate law or principle governing the reality which he perceives. Even if he claims that reality is nothing but an illusion or a solipsistic dream, he must admit that there is still some factor which produced the illusion or the dream. He may find it worthwhile to learn more about the factor, and in doing so he will discover that ordinary scientific methods do not bring him anywhere near understanding it. In his search he will undoubtedly come across other people who claim that they have found a method of reaching this understanding. But here he is likely to come up against a stone wall, because their method is so unscientific and contrary to his whole training that he will not dare to venture in this new direction for fear of losing his common sense, which is, in fact, all he has. And here for the first time, psychology can help him, first by showing him that science and religion are not incompatible, second by explaining to him why he depends on his intellect only, and why the name of God makes him uneasy, and third by assuring him that his emotional life can be liberated and be-

come a source of energy for his spiritual development. All this can be demonstrated on purely intellectual grounds without analyzing the person.

Let us consider the first point, the possible compatibility of science and religion, since it is of importance to many intellectuals. Although depth psychology is widely known, little is said about its implications for those who study the relationship between the scientific, or material, and the spiritual. Particularly illuminating in this respect is the representation of the human psyche by Dr. C. G. Jung. As he describes it, the conscious is merely a point, which contains little more than an idea or a fleeting impression. Immediately below it we have a comparatively large area of memory, sometimes called the subconscious, or preconscious, a storehouse in which we accumulate knowledge. Here we have multiplication tables, our own biography and those of our friends, languages, some addresses and telephone numbers, and such odds and ends as have remained from our school days. All this information is available and is used in mental processes directed apparently by the conscious, although taking place in this preconscious area. Memories of emotional happenings are here as well, and can be revived and brought into consciousness.

Deeper down lies the unconscious. Its highest layer contains things forgotten because of their small importance, things never consciously noticed, and perhaps some important things which were unpleasant. They cannot be recalled by simple asking, but can be remembered through conscious effort, or in a hypnotic state. Sometimes they spring up spontaneously when we least expect them. This layer of the unconscious has one thing in common with the preconscious and the conscious: it speaks the same language, is not disguised, and does not use symbols.

The next layer down, however, is a different one, mainly composed of things so painful or so remote that no amount of

conscious effort can bring them up. Factors leading to character formation, part of the ethical code acquired in early childhood (Freud's superego), deep emotional conflicts of the past, and hidden conflicts of the present are all here. They may be brought into the conscious by hypnosis, but they then often produce a most disturbing effect, and that is why hypnosis is seldom resorted to in psychiatry. The content of the unconscious may be revealed by psychoanalysis, or some part of it may, unbidden, invade the conscious. In either case this part of the unconscious speaks in parables and uses symbols (in dreams), or symptoms (in neuroses). This is the lowest layer of our personal psyche, called the personal unconscious. By penetrating still deeper we find a stratum which does not belong to any particular individual but which is held in common by a group of people, such as a family or a social or professional group. The deeper we go the more the layers of the unconscious correspond to wider groups: a nation, a race, the whole of humanity. Accordingly we call this the collective unconscious.

Since the depth of layers in the psyche is a function of time, and consequently of our development, there is no reason to suppose that the unconscious stops at any particular point. Indeed there are indications, if not proofs, that it continues to the animal level. By extrapolating from this partly known level of the psyche we may arrive at purely speculative layers of low organic life, then of inorganic matter, and finally of a cosmic collective unconscious. We use the word "finally": because we have reached the limits of our imagination, which however does not mean that we have reached the limits of the psyche.

Jung's image of the psyche not only shows its construction, but helps explain most psychic phenomena, gives direction to the integration of the unconscious, and even allows speculation about the relationship between the psyche and so-called paranormal manifestations. Therefore it is valuable to the person who desires to express his idea of reality in one neat concept.

It may reassure him that the search for truth through psychological channels need not be below his personal dignity. It is hardly necessary to add that this image of the psyche is nothing more than a parable, and that by understanding it one is not much nearer to ultimate reality than he was before.

Our hypothetical person is at the beginning of a long road. His first difficulties involve the need to live a comparatively decent life, and it seems that many teachers who try to help the beginner on this thorny path are overly optimistic about human nature. Even Patanjali, who, in his *Yoga-Sutras* of 200 B.C., led the seeker step by step to his ultimate destination, passed lightly over this first stage. He simply stated that the seeker must live a virtuous life by observing certain positive (*yama*) and negative (*niyama*) rules of behavior. If we reflect that one of these virtues is *ahimsa* (non-injuring), which includes not killing human beings, even in self-defense, we see what we are up against, since only one particular form of non-killing—namely, pacifism—seems in itself a nearly insoluble problem.

This is the point where many seekers give up, thinking that the problems are more than they had bargained for. And if they turn to the mystical disciplines they will find generalities or advice which would be of use only to more advanced seekers. However, if the seeker will turn again to psychology, he will find that hundreds of books have been written on living a decent and well-adjusted life. As a matter of fact, psychology can help the individual to adjust to an existing environment regardless of whether this environment is composed of cannibals or Quakers. And it has about the same approach to the task as Patanjali in his initial recommendations: do it, because if you do not, you cannot proceed. You need not consciously believe in anything in particular except that it is worthwhile to go on with the work. I find this attitude more satisfying than faith and rituals, for although these are supposed to convince me, an initial conviction is required before one can perform them in the proper spirit.

Suppose that our seeker accepts a psychological approach to his dilemma; he will then resort to some type of psychoanalysis. Probably the first question tackled will be why he decided to search for truth. And as usual in psychoanalysis there will be many answers coming from different levels, from the most obvious to the most unexpected. It can happen that the seeker soon finds a satisfactory answer: such as, that his search for knowledge has been nothing but a way to solve an inferiority complex, or to justify his pride. If so, he may abandon the search for truth, and emerge a slightly better person. No damage has been done, and this is still a far better solution than years of frustration and unconscious hatred.

At this stage he will understand why he could not have any but an intellectual approach to his situation. Perhaps it was his conflict with his father projected on all authority, most of all on the supreme authority. Perhaps he hated his mother and the whole emotional life that she stood for, and thus had to take refuge in his reason. From understanding to overcoming a particular attitude is a strenuous step, but not impossible. As the psychoanalysis progresses there is more and more energy available to help him with the next problem.

Now he can tackle his shortcomings, and get rid of them if he really wishes to. By this time his understanding can no longer be a purely intellectual one, or it will not succeed. Emotional factors must be gradually integrated into his mental processes so that he may have enough insight to distinguish between personal deceptions and purely conventional ones. He should not fall into the trap of putting the deceits before the truths, and searching endlessly for more and more deception in himself and in his neighbors. This preoccupation can be in itself the deadliest vice, a disguised expression of one's hatred toward himself and others.

One of the most difficult qualities to rid oneself of is pride. Pride originates from insecurity and gives the person a false

sense of importance. It is not an incentive to be better, but only to imagine oneself better than others (as found in Karen Horney's idealized image). In its pure form pride makes a person affected, ridiculous, and unhappy. But very often it disguises itself as humility, modesty, piety, voluntary poverty, and pacifism. Without psychoanalysis one would never know whether he had one of these virtues or was just showing off.

At its worst, pride combines with a morbid, holier-than-thou attitude, as if to say, "See how superior I am to know that I am a sinner, which, of course, the unregenerate do not know." Even in Christianity there are many hypocrites of this kind, although Jesus took infinite pains to make clear his disgust for Pharisees. It must be an evil particularly appealing to human nature.

Another evil is the "sour grapes technique." A person rationalizes his faults into virtues. He is a pacifist because he is afraid of fighting, chaste because he is sexually inhibited, or honest because he does not know how to cheat.

Hostility, like pride, may come from a feeling of insecurity. It exhibits a wide range of forms, from gossip—a comparatively inoffensive type of jealousy—to murder. But it usually appears in disguise. Our social conditioning makes it quite acceptable in a variety of manifestations. Mild hostility may result in one man's becoming a reporter or a critic, while acute hostility may cause another to choose a military career. Unfortunately, persons with unintegrated hostility often seek refuge in such occupations as judge, teacher, and even preacher.

Arrogance and pleasure seeking are always signs of immaturity, and although annoying rather than harmful, they are obstacles to psychic development as well as to the spiritual life. They produce the complainer whom one hears saying, "I should have this," or "This is my right," or "I did not deserve this after all I have suffered."

Psychoanalysis deals with conventional deceptions in two stages. First it shows them for what they are. Then it deals with

them in the same way as with any symptom to be gotten rid of.

The difficulty in recognizing conventional deceptions without the aid of psychoanalysis lies in the fact that these falsehoods are usually associated with a set of uncompromising interdictions rather than with the spirit of a religion. When taken literally without regard for Christian love or Hindu detachment they may have disastrous effects upon the seeker. He will be tactlessly frank when asked by a lady whether he likes her new hat, or he will not help put out a fire because it is the Sabbath, or he will refuse to use disinfectants for fear he might kill germs. Psychoanalysis will soon make clear that his principles are nothing more than the shifting of the burden of responsibility to someone else's shoulders, and the avoiding of spiritual, or rather ethical, problems.

This "flight into principles" is probably most destructive where sexuality is concerned. All sexual taboos are social in origin, and were superimposed on religion not by its founders but by much less integrated followers. Eventually, with the help of a morbid clergy, the taboos degenerated into a persecution mania. It is perfectly true that many schools of mysticism advise continence, but they base this counsel on the same principle on which they discourage the seeker from very hard manual labor: to conserve all disposable energy for the main effort. However, to use this accumulated energy advantageously, one has first to clear the path of all other obstacles, so that the energy may have an outlet. Otherwise, it will drive the seeker into fanaticism or some even worse form of mental disorder.

Psychoanalysis can save us from two more delusions. One is the prevalent misconception about the efficacy of will power, which is supposed to be a decisive factor in the development of the personality. But when we apply will power to eliminate our faults we use it against ourselves. This may be all very well if we truly know what we are fighting, and psychoanalysis gives us precisely this knowledge. Otherwise the internal fight may result in a non-creative sense of guilt, self-contempt, self-hatred,

and finally in the wish for self-destruction. In other people this self-hatred will be projected in a persecution mania, or displaced towards the environment, thus reinforcing the evils which it was supposed to eliminate.

The other fallacy is the concept of sin. Psychology reveals our "sins" for what they are: misunderstandings within ourselves. Once understood, they only require effort (we may call it will power) to be eliminated. Thus in the last analysis there is but one sin which cannot be reduced to simpler factors, and that is lack of understanding, or rather lack of will to acquire this understanding.

It took us many centuries to arrive by scientific methods at this conclusion. But long before our era Hindu mysticism knew as much. It found only one vice which could be interpreted as sin: ignorance or lack of discrimination.

Thus the path to mystical experiences is open at last and cleared of the more important obstacles. The seeker has a fairly good knowledge of his personal unconscious and more energy than he started with. What is equally important is that he is immune to many of the pitfalls of the early stages of mysticism.

For the benefit of those who might object that this highly technical and apparently easy way of dealing with difficulties is incompatible with the spirit of mysticism, we may remind them that the psychoanalytical method is not easy at all and involves a great deal of suffering. It has been said again and again that a successful psychoanalytic session is comparable to a major surgical operation without an anesthetic. It may be debatable whether suffering is a necessary condition for spiritual development. But psychoanalysis does not alleviate it during the process; it makes the path straighter but not less thorny.

One of the first exercises common to all mystical schools is gaining control over mental processes. This control may be expressed in intellectual concentration on one subject, and in complete suspension of mental activity. The latter stage is difficult for many people. Here again psychology can help by point-

ing out both the necessity for subduing the mental life, and the reason why we are so often unwilling to do so.

According to the Jungian conception of the psyche the purpose of mystical exercises expressed in psychological terms is to integrate (or to become aware of) all the layers of the unconscious, one after another. It is immaterial whether this integration embraces the whole content of each layer, or just drills a tunnel through it. But each layer in turn must become accessible to the conscious, which in the process undergoes a transformation.

To reach a certain layer of the unconscious the overlaying strata must first be mastered and quieted. Thus in later stages the emotional life corresponding to the personal unconscious must be dealt with in the same manner as was the mental life at the very beginning. In these more advanced stages, however, the psychological technique is of little if any value, because the process of mystical integration is entirely different from the process of psychoanalysis. Where the latter uses intellect to interpret symptoms, dreams, or association tests, the former is based entirely on a direct intuitive method of acquiring knowledge, and neither the method nor the knowledge thus gained can be satisfactorily described in psychological terms. Intellectual activity does not come into it at all, though it must be under perfect control before the process of integration can start.

The last service the psychoanalytical technique can render the person is to help him in mastering the intellectual life. First of all it shows him the intellect in the proper light. During the early stages of psychoanalysis he realizes that the intellect is nothing but a tool which serves indiscriminately any emotion rising to the surface. Although a very efficient tool in reconciling emotional drives with the requirements of the ego, and with the external world, nevertheless it is not autonomous, has no sense of values, and cannot solve any conflict between emotions unless activated by other factors.

Psychoanalysis shows why we are so reluctant to part even for a while with the services of reason. When deprived of reason we are at the mercy of whatever may emerge from the unconscious, which in an ordinary state of awareness is rationalized by the intellect. Since the content of the unconscious is often terrifying and its invasion may actually disorganize the conscious, our reluctance is quite justified in ordinary circumstances. But since psychoanalysis has already shown the person the most unpleasant part of his personal unconscious, there is much less fear, consequently much less resistance, and this resistance can be still further lowered by more analysis.

At this point we cannot expect any more help from psychology, because the mystical experience is of a different nature from the psychic experience. The seeker is now prepared to assimilate written records of mystical experiences left by his predecessors.

If psychology made a great mistake in trying to explain away religion, then religion would make an equally great error in rejecting psychology as an aid in spiritual development. Unfortunately, this is exactly what has happened. Nearly all Christian denominations, disgusted by early Freudian teachings, turned away from psychology as if it were black magic. Unwittingly they furnished psychologists with a badly needed argument: that religion recognized a threat in psychology and hoped to escape destruction by denying its existence. What the real reason is behind the lack of interest is hard to say. If we are consistent and reject psychological methods in overcoming those of our shortcomings which are of psychological origin, we should also reject physiological methods in healing physiological disorders as well. But since we cure headaches with aspirin, why not cure selfishness with psychoanalysis? Neither of these ailments is spiritual, but both prove to be obstacles in spiritual development, and should be eliminated in the most efficient manner.

SILENT MEETING

But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

MATTHEW 12:36

THE IMPORTANCE OF SILENCE in spiritual life has been recognized since time immemorial. Silence has been considered both a method to achieve knowledge and the result of knowledge. Nearly all schools of mysticism have used silence in the initial stages of their discipline. But we must distinguish between the individual silence of the mystical schools and the group silence of the Friends meeting.

To describe the mystical path is not to explain it. Practitioners of Eastern mysticism have taken infinite pains to explain every step, but due to the difference in culture and language these explanations are nearly meaningless when translated. However, we can evaluate the whole process in psychological terms, crude and technical as these terms sometimes are.

Of the two types of silence, individual and group, the individual is much easier to interpret psychologically. In the yoga techniques of Patanjali, whose steps can easily be translated into Western terminology, the ultimate purpose is the union (yoga) with God. This union with reality represents a much deeper integration than is ever achieved in psychotherapy. It must pene-

trate not only the layers of the personal unconscious, but the whole of the collective unconscious. In psychology we can hardly define this "whole of the unconscious;" we can only speculate on its depth. We feel that it is even deeper than the cosmic level, that it is bottomless, and that this is the direction in which ultimate reality lies. The mystical path, then, is the process of integration. From what we know about the integration of personality, the first stages of analysis and mysticism appear nearly identical.

Preparatory to yoga is "submission to the Law," a decision to change oneself which implies resignation to a higher authority. Dissatisfaction with oneself would be impossible if one did not acknowledge, at least unconsciously, the existence of a moral code. Beyond this preparatory phase silence is used in all steps of initiation: the silence of the body, of the senses, of the intellect, and of the emotions.

The silence of the body hardly needs interpretation. In psychoanalysis this stage is scarcely recognized; there is the analyst's couch and the general advice to relax, but not much more. In the second stage, that of "sense withdrawal," the ego comes into a prominent position, controlling the lines of communication between the psyche and the body.

But in the silence of the intellect the ego's role becomes negative. The ego now prevents all mental activity from becoming conscious, which finally results in this activity's ceasing altogether. In consequence, particularly owing to the absence of rationalization, there is a certain merging between the ego and the personal unconscious—a process similar in effect to analysis, though the method is completely different. Meanwhile the conscious, cut off from the outside and from all intellectual activity, is less sharply defined and becomes blurred with the upper unconscious.

In the final stage, the silence of the emotions, this process of merging is so advanced that there is little distinction between

conscious and unconscious. Here the adept's long training enables him to keep the process under control and to emerge from it into normal life; otherwise it might end in psychosis.

Although depth psychology is comparatively new, the idea of penetrating into oneself is very old. In the 13th century Albertus Magnus thus described the suspension of the process of thinking:

When thou prayest, shut the door—that is, the doors of thy senses [compare with the second stage of yoga]. Keep them barred and bolted against all phantasms and images. . . . He who penetrates into himself and so transcends himself, ascends truly to God. . . . This brings us unto the darkness of the mind, whereby we can ascend to the contemplation even of the mystery of the Trinity.

What is this “darkness of the mind”? The author continues:

Do not think about the world, not about thy friends, not about the past, present, or future, but consider thyself to be outside of the world and alone with God, as if thy soul were already separated from the body, and had no longer any interest in peace or war, or the state of the world.

The great Hindu teacher, Vivekananda, for the benefit of his Western readers, compares the psyche to a deep pool of water stirred by the wind. The observer sees only the reflections on the surface. But if he waits until the wind dies the surface becomes smooth, and the plants or rocks near the surface become visible. If he waits still longer the mud and silt slowly settle down and layer after layer of water becomes clear, until the very bottom of the pool comes into sight.

To understand the mystical process in psychological terms will help us in comparing individual with group silence.

First of all, is there a difference between these two forms of silence?

In a group where each member behaves as if he were alone,

following the steps described above, the answer would be negative. There might be secondary circumstances, such as encouragement from the example of others, but for all practical purposes members of such a group could work regardless of the distance of one from another.

Training in individual mysticism may be conducted in its initial stages in a group under a leader. This happens in some Oriental schools. The influence of the leader may be direct (teaching), or indirect (common meditation), but as far as we can judge it helps the adept only up to the very early emotional stage, and then the process is the same as above.

But an entirely different situation exists when the group works not as many individuals but as a whole. Then the primary object is the development of group unity, and the mystical experience will grow out of this unity. We know that such groups do exist, and Quaker meeting for worship is the best proof of their validity. However, little has been done to explain the process which takes place in such a group. While nearly every school of individual mysticism has its detailed discipline, in group mysticism only very general directions are given, and often none whatsoever. This can baffle and discourage the beginner. Perhaps many failures to achieve unity in a modern meeting are due to this very lack of rational direction. We cannot here enlarge upon why we need such direction when simple people of past centuries did not, but it seems obvious that we do need it.

Group mysticism is not as easy to interpret psychologically as individual mysticism. Because group psychotherapy concentrates more on adjustment than on integration there is hardly any parallel between a therapeutic group and a silent meeting. Except for spontaneity they have nothing in common.

The growth of group mysticism has a rather short history. Aside from groups engaged in individual mystical training, and mass silence used as a means to dramatize a special mystery or liturgy, there is no evidence of anything faintly resembling a

silent meeting before the 14th century. Silent meeting was the culmination of endless efforts directed to preserving the original purity of apostolic Christianity. These efforts, nearly all classified as heresies by the Church, started very early in its history; it is rather astonishing how they led to Quakerism.

As early as the 6th century the Severians, under the influence of the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, claimed that the only way of reaching God was through a personal mystical experience:

We ought to know that our mind has the power for thought, through which it views things intellectual, but that the union through which it is brought into contact with things beyond itself surpasses the nature of the mind. We must then contemplate things Divine by union not in ourselves, but by going out of ourselves and becoming wholly of God.

DIONYSIUS

A chain of heresies which started with the Paulicians in 7th century Armenia travelled through Bulgaria, and into southern France, where it gave rise to the Albigenses in the 11th century and the Waldenses, led by Peter Waldo of Lyons, in the 12th century. These heresies had much in common. They opposed war and the death penalty. They did not approve of oaths. They rejected baptism, all liturgy, a professional clergy, and even church buildings.

The Brethren of the Free Spirit in the 13th century (Switzerland and Alsace) introduced the principle which was later called by Friends "the Inner Light." Ortlieb of Strasbourg said that "man ought to give up all externals and follow the leadings of the Spirit within himself." The Brethren of the Free Spirit gradually gained great influence in the Beghard movement and by the end of the 13th century dominated it. Although the meetings for worship were not silent, speaking was supposed to be spontaneous.

By withdrawing into ourselves, and by separating ourselves from all forms, all images, all particular qualities, we feel within ourselves the eternal wisdom of God.

JOHANN RUYSBROECK

The Beghards, who arose in the 13th century, were at first more of a social than a religious movement. They were probably the first experiment in the Christian world with "intentional communities." Due to the Crusades and other wars, unmarried women presented a difficult problem at this time. The solution was found by Lambert le Begue of Liege who organized small communities where women could live, work, and pray. These communities had their own churches, hospitals, and cemeteries. Later on, similar communities for men were opened. They were secular institutions and the inmates had complete freedom both in joining and in renouncing the community life. There are indications that the worship had a group character without any liturgy.

In later movements (Friends of God, 14th century; Stille Frommen, 16th century) silence becomes more prominent, but still there is no evidence that group silence was used to any great extent. The first meetings where silence was not accidental were introduced by the "Family of Love" in about the middle of the 16th century. The founder of the Familists, Henry Nicholas of Munster, "urges his Family to break spiritual bread together in stillness . . . until the spiritual, heavenly, and uncovered being of Christ appears and comes to their spirit." The silence was compulsory; that is, the congregation did not speak until allowed to do so.

Another movement still closer to the Quaker meeting for worship was the Seekers. Since we do not know anything about their origins, except that they existed for quite a long time and that they often belonged to other religious groups as well, it is hard to say whether they developed their own type of meeting

or whether they adopted and adapted the customs of the Familists. The name "Seekers" is first used at the very beginning of the 17th century. Their meetings were not as silent as those of the Familists. In the words of William Penn, they "waited together in silence, and as anything arose in one of their minds that they thought favored with a Divine Spring, so they sometimes spoke." The influence of Seekers on Quakers dates from about the middle of the 17th century. They were the earliest converts to Quakerism. Between 1652 and 1657 George Fox visited their groups in Westmorland, Bristol, Sussex, and Chester, and encountered a very receptive attitude.

It seems quite certain that the silent meeting for worship was not invented by Fox, but was brought into the Quaker movement by the Seekers. Rufus Jones states flatly that "they [Quakers] took from the Seekers of the English Commonwealth Period the custom of sitting silent in meeting for worship." There are other signs of the Seekers' influence: the words "to wait" in the sense of being silent; the expression "Inward Light"; such customs as the general meeting on the fourth day of the week. Since the Seekers joined the Friends so early in their history it is hard to say what the Quaker meeting looked like before this happened. It seems that there were no special rules and that the proceedings were spontaneous, particularly since in most such meetings the Friends were in the minority.

All through the history of Quakerism there is an attempt to preserve the original form of the meeting as it was introduced by the Seekers. Silence must prevail, but it cannot be compulsory. The congregation must reach a stage of "communion," and wait for the mystical experience. Any messages must be the result of this experience, and must not be prepared in advance. George Fox laid down the rules for individual behavior during the meeting very early (Epistle 10, 1658), so early that it is even possible that he arrived quite independently at the same conclusions as the Seekers.

Stand still in that which is pure, after ye see yourselves; and then mercy comes in. After thou seest thy thoughts, and temptations, do not think, but submit; and then power comes.

Since for most people silence was quite a new element in their religious life, Robert Barclay wrote in *Truth Triumphant*:

As there can be nothing more opposite to the natural will and wisdom of man than this silent waiting upon God, so neither can it be obtained nor rightly comprehended by man, but as he layeth down his own wisdom and will, so as to be content to be thoroughly subject to God.

The meeting can be good and refreshful, though from the sitting down to the rising up thereof there hath not been a word as outwardly spoken.

Here the emphasis is on "outwardly," indicating awareness of messages delivered otherwise than by words. To stress the importance of common effort he continues:

. . . each not only partakes of the particular refreshment and strength which comes from the good in himself but is a sharer in the whole body, as being a living member of the body, having the joint fellowship and communion with all.

And in his, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, he pleads not only for, "an outward silence of the body, but an inward silence of the mind," which the seeker may achieve "by abstaining from his own thoughts and imaginations and from all the self-workings and motions of his own mind, as well in things materially good as evil."

Isaac Penington warns the Friends:

If any man speaks there, he must speak as the vessel out of which God speaks; as the trumpet out of which he gives the sound. Therefore there is to be waiting in silence, till the spirit of the Lord move to speak.

For a man is not to speak his own words, or in his own wisdom, or time, but the spirit's words, in the spirit's wisdom, and time, which is when he moves and gives to speak.

A Brief Account of Silent Meetings

These were the foundations of the meeting for worship as laid in the 17th century. It was subsequently reinforced by the influence of Continental Quietism. The fundamental work of this movement was *The Spiritual Guide Which Disentangles the Soul* by Miguel de Molinos, which appeared in 1675. It first affected the Catholic Church, and only much later penetrated Quakerism. Its theoretical effect on the meeting for worship was not necessarily disastrous. It meant only less emphasis on verbal messages.

More frequently the meeting is broken up without a word having been spoken. But the mind has been fed. You go away with a sermon not made with hands. You have bathed with stillness.

Charles Lamb, "A Quaker's Meeting," *Essays of Elia*

On the other hand, a complete silence lasting years resulted in apathy, if not stupor. John Bellers has to warn Friends that "the silence of a religious and spiritual worship is not a drowsy . . . state of the mind but a sequestering or withdrawing of it from all visible objects and vain imaginations. . . .

William E. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*

Another aspect of Quietism was its conflict with evangelism which brought into the Society of Friends a spate of religious argument, so that silent worship became all but extinct. Even the Hicksites' attempt to return to original Quakerism did not put an end to this situation, which in many cases persists to this day. Caroline Stephen wrote in the 1890's:

Of all the disturbing influences from without which hinder the consciousness of communion with God, I think that un-

warranted words—words not freshly called forth by the united exercise of the moment—are the most disturbing.

Quaker Strongholds

And we might here quote Aldous Huxley concerning the abuse of words in religions:

All these idle words, the silly no less than the self-regarding and the uncharitable, are impediments in the way of the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground, a dance of dust and flies obscuring the inward and the outward light.

The Perennial Philosophy

The role of silence in religious experience has been surveyed in mysticism, Quakerism, and psychology. My conclusion can be expressed in the words of one of the early Christian Fathers, St. Gregory Nazianzus (4th century): "To speak of God is an exercise of great value, but there is one that is worth more, namely to purify one's soul before God in silence." Why is it then that in spite of all this, the majority of meetings for worship do not follow this advice? Why cannot Friends keep silence, or limit themselves to short and significant messages?

Barclay stated that silence is against human nature. We are not used to it. Not only that, but we are afraid of it. Silence of body is bad enough, but silence of mind is often terrifying. If we stop thinking and do not fall asleep we are open to whatever may emerge from the unconscious. And many things are there which we simply cannot face, even when they appear in a disguised form.

So the first condition for achieving silence is to know as much as possible about oneself. One is not frightened by what one knows. This is why George Fox advises: "Stand still . . . after you see yourselves." But even when one does not think any more, one's conscious is invaded by emotional impulses from the unconscious. Fox calls them temptations and advises again:

"After thou seest thy thoughts, and the temptations, do not think, but submit." This very advice can be found in many handbooks of psychotherapy. The discovery that acceptance or submission—as opposed to active resistance—is the only way to deal with the unconscious made modern psychotherapy practicable.

Complete silence, physical, intellectual, and emotional, is only one of the three elements of a meeting for worship. The second is what Barclay calls "communion," a spiritual unity of the whole meeting. One is tempted to interpret it in psychological terms as the whole assembly's attaining the level of the collective unconscious. But what we know about the unconscious does not seem to apply here at all. The meeting for worship appears to be a method entirely different from those described in psychology, in which case the whole process of spiritual union lies closer to the realm of extrasensory perception. Whatever the explanation, the existence of a spiritual bond between the members of a meeting is undeniable. In a successful meeting short messages coming from different speakers, although spaced in time, always form a sequence. It is as if one person were trying in a leisurely manner to solve a problem, not so much by thinking as by intuition. Since the phenomenon is hard to explain, it is still harder to advise anyone how to achieve this union. It seems that the intention of achieving it, together with the silence, produces the desired effect. But intention cannot be interpreted as an effort of will; it is, rather, an acceptance of the inevitable, and the attainment of complete passivity.

The third element of the meeting is the message. Provided that the two other factors, silence and communion, are present, there is no need to control or evaluate the content of a message. It is a part of the collective spiritual experience. This is in the case of a perfect meeting, where all three factors are present, and where they take place in the proper order. However, it is too much to expect all meetings to be so lucky. If only the first two

requirements are realized the meeting is still very good. Even the silence alone is valuable, although it does not carry us beyond the individual experience. However, when the message precedes the other stages of the meeting, we have the wagon before the horse. Then we have at best a discussion on an intellectual level, and at worst a free-for-all competition in making speeches.

The very human aversion to silence is only partly responsible for the failure of meetings. Often the failure results from simple ignorance, both of Quaker customs and of the meaning of the meeting for worship. Sometimes prepared speeches, notes, and books are brought to meeting, or even spontaneous "messages" concerning everything under the sun but worship.

Can we distinguish between the "real" message and the false? This is not easy. To quote from Irvin and Ruth Poley's pamphlet, *Quaker Anecdotes*, "One never knows, does one? And when one does, one isn't sure, is one?" If there is silence and communion in the meeting, there is no problem. Otherwise there is no certitude. The urge to speak does not guarantee validity. It may come from the intensity of one's personal problem or from hostility to or sympathy with the previous speaker. Perhaps one criterion could be this: if there is any doubt in the mind of the speaker as to the value of his message, then he should remain silent. Perhaps another indicator is the shortness of the message. Such communications nearly always strike us as being genuine, while long ones hardly ever do. On the other hand, their form hardly matters. A 19th century Friend, John Wilbur, felt that the more a message was polished, and the more intellectual work had been put into it, "the more it tasted of the pipes."

This is one side of the problem. The other is how to deal with the abuse of the right to speak. The history of meeting worship does not help us very much. In extreme cases the speaker has been removed by force, or has been asked to sit down. Gentle persuasion may be tried after the meeting. But perhaps the best advice is to be patient and charitable. After all, the speaker

does not mean to spoil the meeting. He may be a nuisance, but he sincerely tries to work out his problems, and from this point of view is worth more than the Friend who slumbers quietly in a corner or does not come to meeting at all, thus avoiding the issue.

Both sides—those who feel frustrated by the talk in the meeting and those who do the talking—might meditate on the saying of Lao-tzu:

He who knows does not speak
He who speaks does not know.

We cannot expect everyone to reach the ultimate goal of spiritual development, the stage where one does not speak any more. We are the ones who do not know. We are seekers, not saints.

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